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In Process (2019)

Pauline Clancy

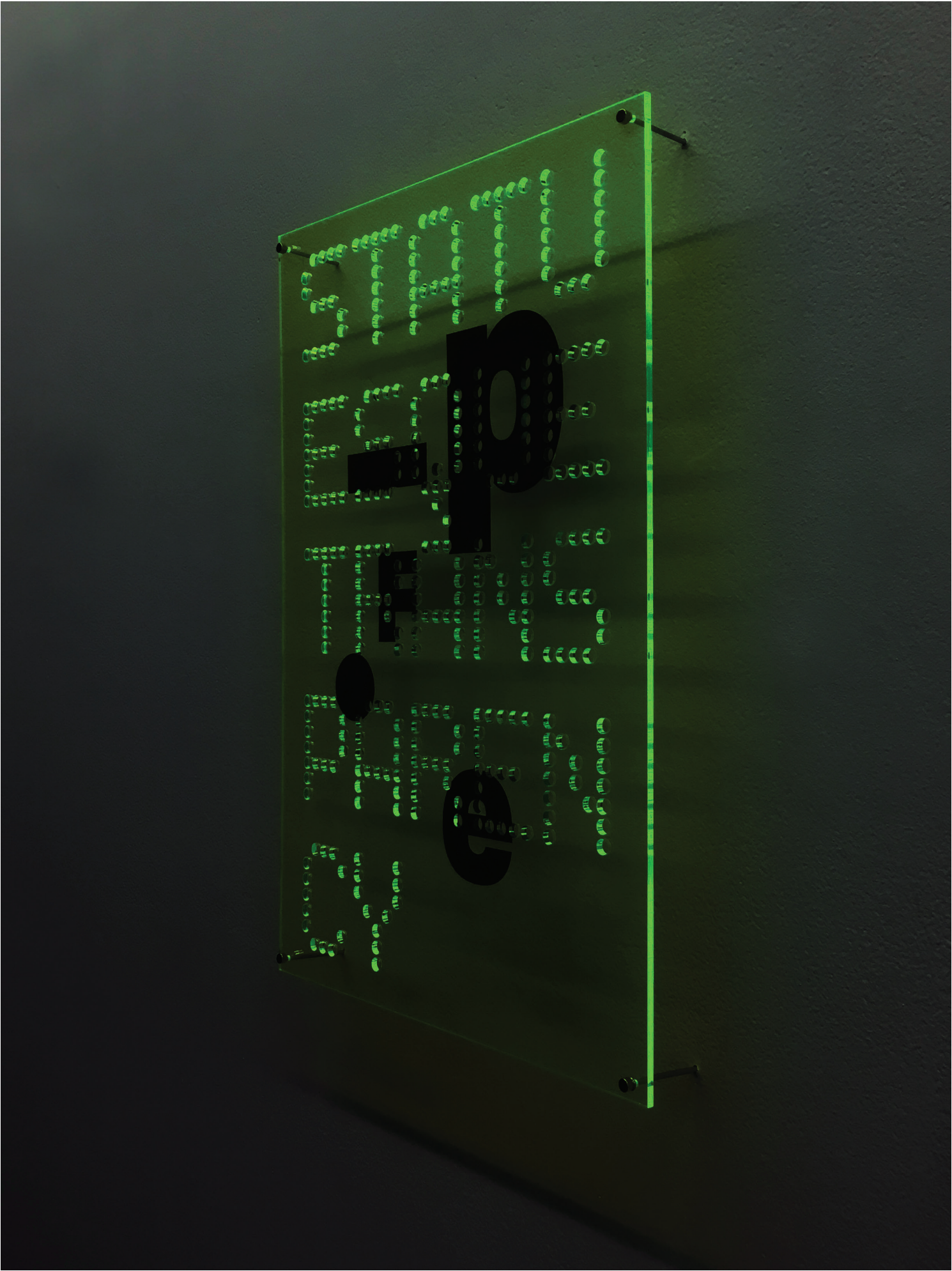
Supervised by: Dr Joseph McBrinn
& Dr Kyle Boyd



In Process forms part of ongoing research into typography and the materiality of language. Typography, the visual representation of language, primarily communicates meaning through written, printed or digital forms. Through this tangible embodiment of language, typography offers an outward symbolic meaning, an external reality in the form of a 'Sign'¹. Viewed through another lens, typography can also reveal the materiality of language; that is when language reflects back onto itself enabling another meaning to form on the visual surface, where text can also be viewed as image. Materiality of language discussed here relates to the medium or form by which language presents itself or that through which language is constructed. As typography is utilised as a vehicle to transport language, where it is the material expression or material form of language, it can therefore be considered a critical component of language.

In Process, mixed media installation, Figs. #1 & 2 (above, right), Pauline Clancy, Ulster University Gallery, Belfast, 2019.

1. In the structuralist system of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), Signifier is a physical representation, for example an image, word or sound. Signified is the mental construct, concept or image formed representing the Signifier. When Signifier and Signified come together, a Sign is formed, creating an external reality.

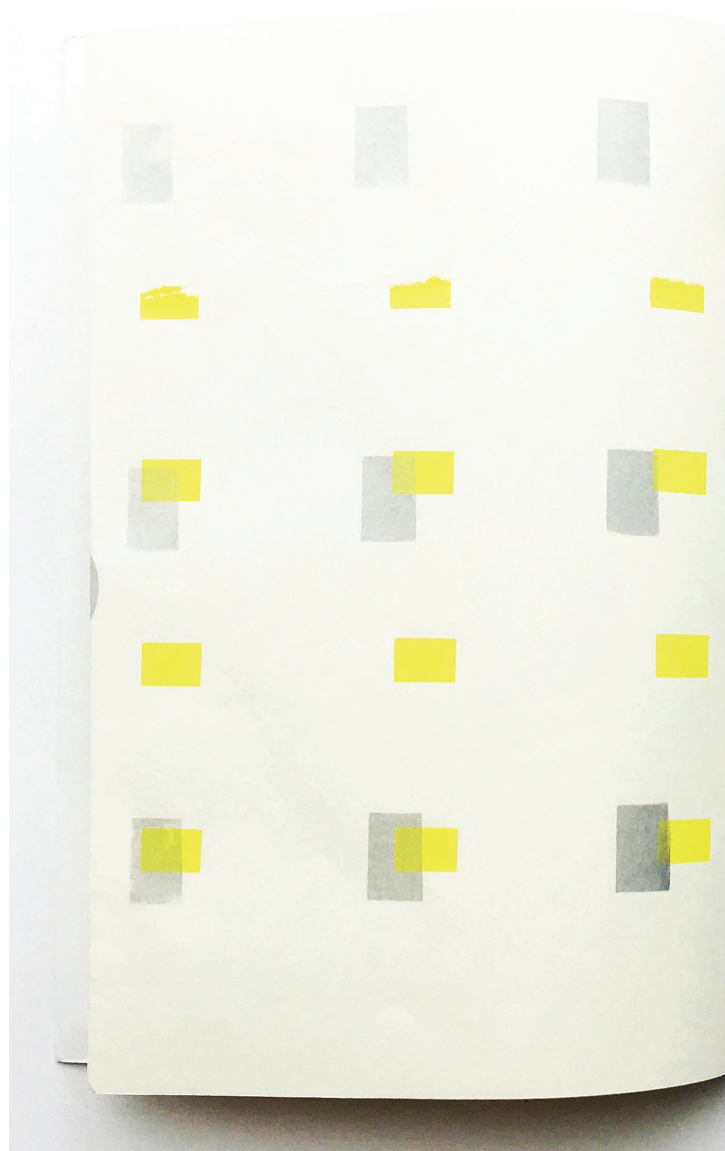


The aim of this research is to examine how a series of of process-led typographic 'events' through analogue (screenprinting) and digital approaches can offer strategies and insights to re-examine and re-configure the visual and (im)material attributes of language in what is considered a post-digital, post-text age. The objectives bring into focus the visual and aesthetic qualities and the surface as a site of meaning production. They also consider an in-between, third space - where digital and analogue assemble and collide, disrupting typographic conventions of legibility and functionality. They explore how the material expression reflects the process of making, in particular examining how changes in the materiality of typography may alter how it is interpreted and understood, further unravelling the link between means of production and production of meaning.

The notion of the typographic 'event' is highlighted in relation to French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925—1995) and his observations on the 'performative nature of language'. In *The Logic of Sense* (1969) Deleuze contemplates sense as something 'wild' existing within language that is 'non-representing' and uncontainable. For Deleuze, the 'wildness' of language or materiality of language is revealed on the surface as an 'event'. The surface is the place where the performance of language occurs and all meaning is possible.

Statuesque Transparency (255mm x 375mm) is laser cut text onto 4mm yellow flame edge acrylic. The term 'Statuesque Transparency' is derived from Canadian typographer and poet, Robert Bringhurst's (1946) seminal and authoritative typographic book, *The Elements of Typographic Style* (1992). The term statuesque implies something beautiful, elegant, impressive; which is immediately diminished and evaporated by the term transparency. In other words, it is invisible or transparent elegance. The notion of invisible elegance relates to the functional and operational purpose of typography as outlined by US typography scholar Beatrice Warde (1900—1969) in her seminal 1930 essay *The Crystal Goblet (or Printing should be Invisible)*. Here, Warde outlines an argument for a rational approach to typography, comparing typography to the imbibing of wine. Warde argues of the inappropriateness of drinking wine from an ornate vessel, instead, she maintains to fully appreciate the content of the glass, the wine, the drinking vessel itself must be invisible. In the same way, typography must solely be the invisible carrier of information and in no way impact on the content.

Statuesque Transparency as a text is typeset in a dot matrix typeface, a typeface created through a series of 2D dot patterns. The dots or circles were laser-cut, creating small, precise voids in the acrylic, building up to form the programmed text. These voids are reminiscent of binary punched tape or perforated paper tape, primarily used for teleprinter communication in the 1950s and 1960s, where a series of holes are punched out from a strip or roll of paper to record data.



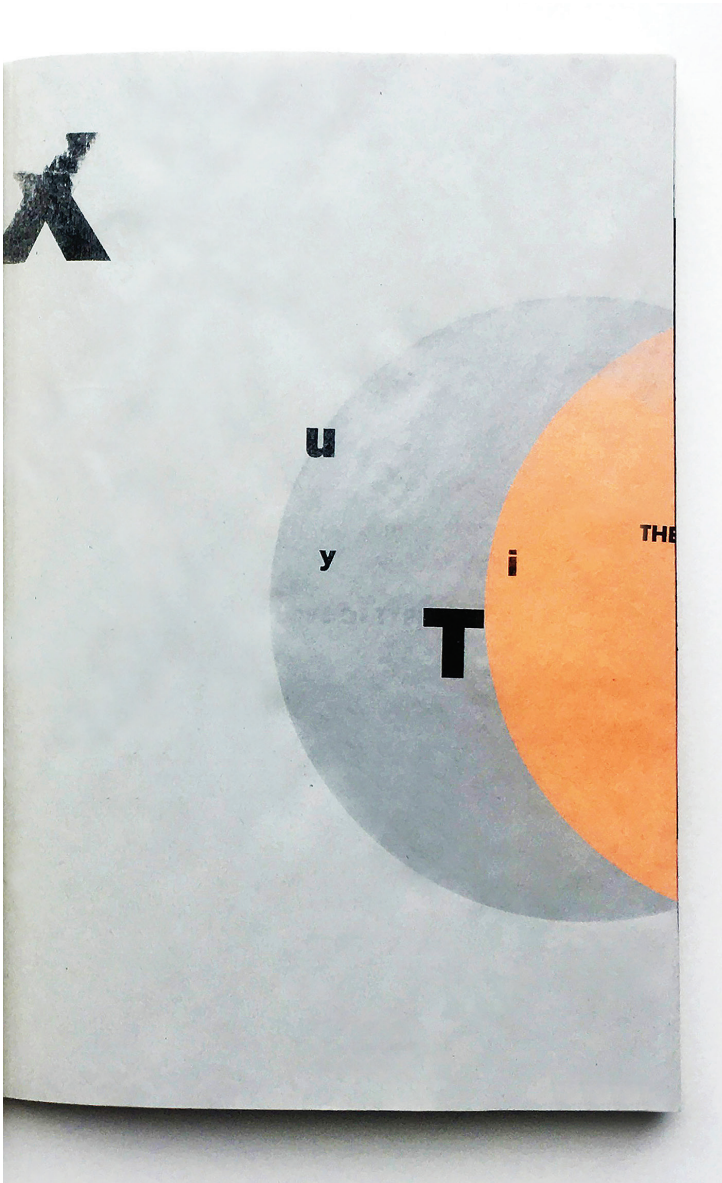
In this context, the void or the negative space becomes a positive container for information. In the same way, for *Statuesque Transparency*, the negative space becomes a positive void, as it is needed in order for the text to exist. The positive void is a conflict and a paradox as noted by Deleuze in his paradox of 'empty space'. There is a play on positive and negative; between what is read and what other information is potentially stored in the void (and what could be deciphered). In a sense, this process tries to make language invisible, while simultaneously only becoming visible through the process of subtraction.

Following the laser-cutting, another textual layer is added through the screenprinting process. This text is taken from another 'event' where a pause in a digital sequence performance created a hierarchical positioning of letterforms. The letterforms are screenprinted in black ink over the punched acrylic surface, in some instances emphasizing and highlighting the small voids created by the laser-cutting. Depending on the available light, one layer of text becomes dominant over the other. These surfaces—that of the black screenprinting ink, the acrylic substrate and the empty surface as a result of the laser-cutting—come together in a play of differences, highlighting both visible and invisible language. Here a third space is occupied through two moments or processes coming together—laser-cutting, a digital, technical, subtractive technique; with screenprinting, an analogue, mechanical, additive process—creating a third moment where new spaces of representation and negotiation of meaning are revealed. These dialectic interactions and material exchanges, while simultaneously disrupt and reveal language also seek new perspectives on the materiality and elusiveness of language.

Process Book 15 (400mm x 300mm) forms part of an ongoing collection of screenprinted test prints created from multiple typographic 'events'. Many different prints are overprinted on the same sheet creating moments of interruption and dialogue between the printed and sometimes abstracted typographic forms. There are no pre-determined, definitive visual outcomes intended for the newsprinted sheets, nor are they considered final and complete pieces, but rather they are utilised as documenting or recording the making process.

They are printed and overprinted, responding to what is exposed on the screen at that particular moment, fostering chance collision and discovery. The immediacy and responsiveness intrinsic in this making approach critically opens up the work to inherent possibilities.

The oscillation of the material substrate is also of significance where the inside pages are predominantly newsprint, which by its very nature is ephemeral. However, utilising the newsprint in this way, curated into a range of spreads and hand-bound into a book, the importance shifts from a material with a relatively low value to becoming a unique artefact.



In Process, mixed media installation, Fig. #3, Pauline Clancy, Ulster University Gallery, Belfast, 2019.